

B I R T H

OF THE

M U S E.

A

P O E M.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES MONTAGUE,

CHANCELLOUR

OF THE

EXCHEQUER, &c.

By Mr. CONGREVE.

Dignum laude virum Musa vetat mori. Horat.

L O N D O N,

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P O E M

TO THE

LIGHT HONORABLE

CHIEF MAGISTRATE

CHANCERY

OF THE

EXCHEQUER

MR CONGRANT

177
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THE
B I R T H
OF THE
M U S E.

DEscend, Celestial *Muse* ! thy Son inspire
Of thee to sing ; infuse the Holy Fire.
Belov'd of Gods and Men, thy self disclose ;
Say, from what Source thy Heav'nly Pow'r arose,
Which from unnumb'red Years deliv'ring down
The Deeds of Heroes deathless in Renown,
Extends their Life and Fame to Ages yet unknown. }

Time and the *Muse* set forth with equal Pace ;
At once the Rivals started to the Race :
And both at once the destin'd Course shall end,
Or both to all Eternity Contend.
One to preserve what t' other cannot save,
And rescue Vertue rising from the Grave.

To thee, O *Montague*, these Strains are sung,
For thee my Voice is tun'd, and speaking Lyre is strung ;
For ev'ry Grace of ev'ry *Muse* is thine,
In thee their various Fires united shine,
Darling of *Phæbus* and the tunefull Nine! }

To thee alone I dare my Song Commend,
 Whose Nature can forgive, and Pow'r defend,
 And shew by turns the Patron and the Friend.

Begin, my *Muse*, from *Jove* derive thy Song,
 Thy Song of right, does first to *Jove* belong :
 For thou thy self art of Celestial Seed,
 Nor dare a Sire inferiour boast the Breed.
 When first the Frame of this vast Ball was made,
 And *Jove* with Joy the finish'd Work survey'd ;
 Then change of Things, the rise and fall of States,
 Tho' yet to come, were destin'd by the Fates.
 Then *Time* had first a Name ; by firm Decree
 Appointed Lord of all Futurity ;
 Within whose spacious Womb the Fates repose
 Causes of Things, and secret Seeds enclose,
 Which ripening there, shall one Day gain a Birth,
 And force a Passage thro' the teeming Earth.
 To him they gave, to rule the spacious Light,
 And bound the yet unparted Day and Night ;
 To wing the Hours that whirl the rowling Sphere
 To shift the Seasons, and conduct the Year.
 The Term of Empires, and Extent of Power
 To him they trust, and fix each fated Hour.
 This mighty Rule, to *Time* the Fates ordain,
 But yet to hard Conditions bind his Reign.
 For ev'ry beauteous Birth he brings to light,
 (How good soe'er and grateful in his sight,)
 He must again to Native Earth restore,
 And all his Race with Iron Teeth devour.
 Nor Good, nor Great shall scape his hungry Maw,
 But bleeding Nature prove the rigid Law.

Not yet, the loos'd Earth aloft was flung,
 Or pois'd amid the Skies in ballance hung.
 Nor yet, did Golden Fires the Sun adorn,
 Or borrow'd Lustre silver *Cynthia's* Horn.
 Nor yet, had *Time* Commission to begin,
 Or Fate the many-twisted Web to spin;
 When all the Heav'nly Host assembled came
 To view the World yet resting on its Frame;
 Eager they press, to see the Sire dismiss
 And rowl the Globe along the vast Abyss.

But deep revolving Thoughts the God retain,
 Which for a space suspend the promis'd Scene.
 Again, his Eyes inspect *Time's* pregnant Womb,
 Again, he reads the World's predestin'd Doom.
 Abroad the bulky Volume he displays,
 And present views the Deeds of future Days.

A beauteous Prospect paints the foremost Page,
 Where Nature's Bloom presents the Golden Age.
 The Golden Leaf to Silver soon resigns,
 And fair the Sheet, but yet more faintly shines.
 Of baser Brass, the next denotes the Times,
 An impious Page deform'd with deadly Crimes.
 The Fourth yet wears a worse and browner Face,
 And adds to Gloomy Days an Iron Race.

He turns the Book, and ev'ry Age reviews,
 Then all the Kingly Line his Eye pursues:
 The First of Men, and Lords of Earth design'd,
 Who under him should rule the rest of Human-kind.

Of Future Heroes, there, the Lives he reads,
 In search of Glory spent, and Godlike Deeds;
 Who Empires found, and goodly Cities build,
 And Savage Men Compel to leave the Field.

All this th' Eternal saw, and seen approv'd;
 When Lo ! but thence a Narrow Space remov'd,
 And Hungry Time has all the Scene defac'd,
 The Kings destroy'd, and laid the Kingdoms waste:
 Together all in Common Ruins lie,
 And but anon and ev'n the Ruins die.
 Th' Almighty, inly touch'd, Compassion found,
 To see Great Actions in Oblivion drown'd;
 And forward search the Roll, to find if Fate
 Had no Reserve to spare the Good and Great.
 Bright in his View the Trojan Heroes shine,
 And Ilian Structures rais'd by Hands Divine;
 But Ilium soon in Native Dust is laid,
 And all her boasted Pile a Ruine made:
 Not Great *Aeneas* can her Fall withstand,
 But flies, to save his Gods, to foreign Land.
 The Roman Race, succeed the Dardan State,
 And first and second *Cesar* God-like Great.
 Still on to after-days his Eyes descend,
 And rising Heroes still the Search attend.
 Proceeding thus he many Empires pass'd;
 But fair *Britania* fix'd his Sight at last.

Above the Waves she lifts her Silver Head,
 And looks a *Venus* born from Ocean's Bed.
 For rowling Years, her happy Fortunes smile,
 And Fates propitious bless the beautiful Isle;

To

To Worlds remote, she wide extends her Reign,
 And wields the Trident of the stormy Main.
 Thus on the Base of Empire firm she stands,
 While bright *Eliza* rules the willing Lands.

But soon a Lowring Sky comes on apace,
 And Fate revers'd shews her ill-omen'd Face.
 The Void of Heav'n a Gloomy Horror fills,
 And Cloudy Veils involve her shining Hills;
 Of Greatness pass'd no Footsteps she retains,
 Sunk in a *Series* of Inglorious Reigns.
 She feels the Change, and deep regrets the Shame
 Of Honours lost, and her diminish'd Name:
 Conscious, she seeks from Day to shrowd her Head,
 And glad would shrink beneath her Oozy Bed.

Thus far, the Sacred Leaves *Britania's* Woes
 In shady Draughts, and dusky Lines disclose.
 Th' ensuing Scene revolves a Martial Age,
 And ardent Colours gild the glowing Page.

Behold! of radiant Light an Orb arise,
 Which kindling Day, restores the darkned Skies;
 And see! on Seas the beamy Ball descends,
 And now its Course to fair *Britania* bends:
 Along the foamy Main the Billows bear
 The floating Fire, and waft the shining Sphere.
 Hail, happy *Omen*! Hail, auspicious Sight!
 Thou glorious Guide to yet a greater Light.
 For see! a Prince, whom dazling Arms array,
 Pursuing closely, plows the wat'ry Way,
 And tracks the Glory thro' the flaming Sea.

Britania

Britania, rise; awake, O Fairest Isle,
 From Iron Sleep; again thy Fortunes smile.
 Once more look up, the Mighty Man behold,
 Whose Reign renews another Age of Gold.
 The Fates at length the Blissful Web have spun,
 And bid it round in Endless Circles run.
 Again, shall distant Lands Confess thy Sway,
 Again, the wat'ry World thy Rule Obey;
 Again, thy Martial Sons shall thirst for Fame,
 And win in foreign Fields a deathless Name,
 For *WILLIAM*'s Genius ev'ry Soul inspires,
 And warms the frozen Youth with warlike Fires.
 Already, see, the Hostile Troops retreat,
 And seem forwarn'd of their impending Fate.
 Already routed Foes his Fury feel,
 And fly the Force of his unerring Steel.
 The haughty *Gaul*, who well till now, might boast,
 A Matchless Sword and unresisted Host,
 At his Foreseen approach the Field forsakes;
 His Cities tremble, and his Empire shakes.
 His tow'ring Ensigns long had aw'd the Plain,
 And Fleets audaciously usurp'd the Main;
 A gathering Storm he seem'd, which from afar
 Teem'd with a Deluge of destructive War.
 Till *WILLIAM*'s stronger Genius soar'd above,
 And down the Skies the daring Tempest drove.
 So from the radiant Sun, retires the Night,
 And Western Clouds shot thro' with adverse Light.
 So when th' assuming God, whom Storms Obey,
 To all the warring Winds at once gave way;

The

The frantick Brethren ravag'd all around,
 And Rocks, and Woods, and Shoars their Rage resound ;
 Incumbent o're the Main, at length they sweep
 The liquid Plains, and raise the peaceful Deep :
 But when superiour *Neptune* leaves his Bed,
 His Trident shakes, and shews his awful Head ;
 The madding Winds are hush'd, the Tempests cease,
 And ev'ry rowling Surge resides in Peace.

And now the Sacred Leaf a Landskip wears,
 Where, Heav'n serene, and Air unmov'd appears.
 The *Rose* and *Lilly* paint the verdant Plains,
 And *Palm* and *Olive* shade the Sylvan Scenes.
 The Peaceful *Thames*, beneath his Banks abides,
 And soft, and still, the Silver Surface glides.
 The *Zephyrs* fan the Fields, the whisp'ring Breeze
 With fragrant Breath remurmurs thro' the Trees.
 The warbling Birds applauding new-born Light,
 In wanton Measures wing their airy Flight.
 Above the Floods the finny Race repair,
 And bound aloft, and bask in upper Air ;
 They gild their scaly Backs in *Phæbus* Beams,
 And scorn to skim the Level of the Streams.
 Whole Nature wears a Gay and Joyous Face,
 And blooms and ripens with the Fruits of Peace.

No more the Lab'ring Hind regrets his Toil,
 But Cheerfully Manures the grateful Soil ;
 Secure the Glebe a plenteous Crop will yield,
 And Golden *Ceres* grace the waving Field.
 Th' advent'rous Man, who durst the Deep explore,
 Oppose the Winds, and tempt the shelfy Shoar,

Beneath his Roof now tastes unbroken Rest,
Enough with Native Wealth and Plenty blest.

No more the forward Youth pursues Allarms,
Nor leaves the Sacred Arts for stubborn Arms.
No more the Mothers from their Hopes are torn,
Nor weeping Maids the promis'd Lover Mourn.
No more the Widows Shrieks and Orphans Cries,
Torment the patient Air and wound the Skies.
But peaceful Joys the prosp'rous Times afford,
And banish'd Vertue is again restor'd.
For He whose Arms alone sustain'd the Toil,
And propp'd the nodding Frame of *Britain's* Isle ;
By whose Illustrious Deeds, her Leaders fir'd,
Have Honours lost regain'd, and new acquir'd,
With Equal Sway will Vertue's Laws maintain,
And Good, as Great, in awful Peace shall reign ;
For his Example still the Rule shall give,
And those it taught to Conquer, teach to Live.

Proceeding on, the Father still unfolds
Succeeding Leaves, and brighter still beholds ;
The latest seen the fairest seems to shine,
Yet sudden does to one more fair resign.
Th' Eternal paus'd——
Nor would *Britania's* Fate beyond explore ;
Enough he saw besides the coming Store.
Enough the Heroe had already don,
And round the wide Extent of Glory run ;
Nor further now the shining Path pursues,
But like the Sun the same bright Race renews.

And

And shall remorseless Fates on him have Power !
 Or *Time* unequally such Worth devour !
 Then, wherefore shall the Brave for Fame contest ?
 Why is this Man distinguish'd from the Rest ?
 Whose soaring Genius now sublime aspires,
 And deathless Fame the due Reward requires.
 Approving Heav'n th' exalted Vertue views,
 Nor can the Claim which it approves refuse.

The Great Creator, soon the Grant resolves,
 And in his mighty Mind the Means revolves.
 He thought ; Nor doubted once, again to chuse,
 But spake the Word, and made th' immortal *Muse*.
 Ne'er did his Pow'r produce so bright a Child,
 On whose Creation Infant Nature smild.
 Perfect at first, a finish'd Form she wears,
 And Youth perpetual in her Face appears.
 Th' assembled Gods who long expecting staid,
 With new Delight gaze on the lovely Maid
 And think the wish'd-for World was well delay'd. }
 Nor did the Sire himself his Joy disguise,
 But stedfast view'd, and fix'd, and fed his Eyes.
 Intent a Space, at length He Silence broke,
 And thus, the God the Heav'nly Fair bespoke.

*To thee, Immortal Maid, from this bless'd Hour,
 O'er Time and Fame, I give unbounded Power.
 Thou, from Oblivion shalt the Heroe save ;
 Shalt raise, revive, and Eternize the Brave.*

To thee, the Dardan Prince shall owe his Fame;

To thee, the Cæsars their immortal Name.

Eliza sung by thee, with Fate shall strive,

And long as Time, in Sacred Verse survive.

And yet O Muse, remains the Noblest Theme;

The first of Men, Mature for Endless Fame

Thy future Songs shall grace, and all thy Lays,

Thenceforth, alone shall wait on WILLIAM's Praise,

On his Heroick Deeds, thy Verse shall rise;

Thou shalt diffuse the Fires that he supplies.

Thro' him thy Songs shall more sublime aspire;

And he thro' them, shall deathless Fame acquire:

Nor Time, nor Fate his Glory shall oppose,

Or blast the Monuments the Muse bestows.

*This said, no more remain'd. Th' Ætherial Host
Again impatient Crowd the Crystal Coast.*

The Father, now, within his spacious Hands,

Encompass'd all the mingled Mass of Seas and Lands;

And having heav'd aloft the pond'rous Sphere,

He Launch'd the World to float in ambient Air.

F I N I S

